



Audiobook Release

Casting Call Information

Book: Category: Sci Fi - Word Count: 72000

Narrator: Male, General American Accent

Description

Eighteen years after humanity abandoned a supposedly dead Earth, Commander Mara Venn receives an impossible transmission from the planet's surface. The voice belongs to her brother Eli, whom she believed died during the evacuation. He warns her that humanity was deceived and that Earth never truly died. Now Mara must uncover who created the lie, what remains on Earth, and why someone or something is determined to bring her home.

Audition Part

Chapter One: The Signal

The signal arrived eighteen years after the last human being left Earth. Mara Venn was alone in the observation chamber when the receiver began to pulse. At first, she mistook the sound for part of the station—the familiar metallic groan of Atlas shifting against its orbit. Then it came again. Three short tones. A pause. Three more. Mara lifted her head from the navigation display. Beyond the observation glass, Earth hung beneath her like a beautiful corpse. White clouds still moved across its surface, but nothing lived below them. Not anymore. The receiver pulsed again. She crossed the chamber and touched the communications panel.

“Atlas, identify incoming transmission.”

The station's voice answered immediately. “No transmission detected.” Mara stared at the receiver. Its blue indicator flashed three times.

“You didn't hear that?”

“I do not possess hearing, Commander Venn.”

“You know what I mean.”

“I detected no authorised communication.”

Another pulse filled the chamber. Louder this time. Mara opened a manual diagnostic screen. The receiver was an old emergency unit, built before the evacuation and designed to recognise primitive radio signals. It had not been used in decades.

“Run a complete system analysis.”

“Analysis will require approximately seven minutes.”

“Do it.”

The lights dimmed as Atlas redirected power. Mara leaned closer to the receiver and watched lines of data appear across its display. Origin: unknown. Distance: calculating. Signal type: terrestrial emergency frequency. Her hands went cold.

“That’s impossible,” she whispered. The nearest human settlement was on Kepler-186f, nearly five hundred light-years away. The lunar colonies had failed during the evacuation. Mars had been abandoned even earlier. No living person remained close enough to transmit on an Earth-based emergency channel. Yet the signal continued. Three tones. A pause. Three tones. Then a voice broke through the static.

“Mara?” She stepped backwards. The transmission vanished as suddenly as it had begun. For several seconds, she couldn’t move. The station hummed quietly around her, indifferent to what had just happened.

“Atlas, replay the last ten seconds.”

“Audio replay unavailable.”

“What do you mean, unavailable?”

“No audio was recorded.”

“I heard a voice.”

“I detected no voice.”

“It said my name.”

Atlas remained silent.

Mara forced herself to breathe. She had been awake for thirty-one hours. Exhaustion could produce auditory distortions. She knew that. Every commander knew the symptoms of extended isolation. But exhaustion could not activate a dormant emergency receiver. The diagnostic results appeared.

SYSTEM STATUS: FUNCTIONAL

SIGNAL ORIGIN: EARTH

ESTIMATED LOCATION: NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT

COORDINATES: 37.5407° N, 77.4360° W

Mara read the coordinates twice. Richmond. Her birthplace. The city where her family had lived before the atmospheric fires. The city where her younger brother had died while she waited aboard the final evacuation shuttle. A burst of static came through the receiver.

"Mara, please."

This time, Atlas responded. "Unidentified voice detected."

Mara gripped the edge of the console. The voice was older than she remembered, but she recognised it. She had replayed his final message so many times that every breath was carved into her memory. "Eli?" she whispered. Static crackled.

"I don't have much time," the voice said. "They know you're listening."

"Who knows?" A heavy impact sounded somewhere behind him. Then came screaming distant at first, but moving closer. "Eli, answer me. Who knows?" The signal distorted. His voice stretched into a low mechanical groan before snapping back into focus. "You have to come home." Mara looked through the observation glass at the poisoned world beneath her. "There is no home." Another impact shook the transmission. "They lied to you," Eli said. "Earth never died." The receiver went silent. Then every light aboard Atlas turned red.